

The Second Phase of Confederation



An address by Mr. John M. Godfrey of Toronto,
Vice-Chairman of the Bonne Entente,
at the
Ottawa Forum

February the 10th, 1918

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THE SECOND PHASE OF CONFEDERATION

Last year we celebrated the semi-centennial of Confederation. This anniversary found Canada making every effort to maintain her place in the great struggle for democracy, and also found our Confederation subjected to the severest test, and in the opinion of some at least of our citizens, strained almost to the breaking point. To-night I propose to review briefly some of the salient features in the evolution of Confederation during this first fifty years, and then to discuss the lines along which in the future that evolution should proceed.

Looking back over the last half-century, I think we must agree that the vision of those statesmen who met at Quebec in 1864 and planned a nation has been justified by results.

There are two outstanding things during those fifty years which deserve our notice.

First, there has been a really remarkable absence of racial discord, and only at two periods have the racial differences become acute. The first was in the eighties as a result of the Northwest Rebellion, and the execution of Louis Riel. The second is the present agitation caused by the bilingual school situation in Ontario and the difficulties arising on account of the Military Service Act. As a counter balance to this, Canada was pleased during fifteen years to accept the leadership of one of her greatest French-Canadians. When we are inclined to worry about this problem of the races we should find comfort in looking back over the last half-century. After all, the moderate men in both races on each side of the Ottawa River are in the majority, and it must be admitted that we get along fairly well together. We find a strong confirmation of this in the recent debate on the Francoeur Resolution in the Quebec Legislature. At this time when political feeling runs high this question was debated on a high plane, and with a restraint and expression of patriotism well worthy of emulation.

The second fact which has to be considered in the history of United Canada is the tendency towards provincialism rather than towards nationalism. This seems inevitable in the first years of a federation. In the United States the contest between state rights and federal rights resulted finally in the war of rebellion. In Canada provincial rights and the protection of minorities had necessarily to take first place. Among the Fathers of Federation there are three outstanding figures—Macdonald, Brown and Cartier. Of these three, John A. Macdonald was the one who had the broadest national viewpoint. He favoured a legislative union of the provinces, that is, a union without Provincial Legislatures. He saw the defects in the constitution of the United States and would have imposed an over-riding authority in a central parliament. The Civil War which had rent the United States asunder was a solemn warning against the extreme assertion of state or provincial rights. In an address to the electors of Kingston he said: *"The Government will not relax its exertions to effect that confederation of the North American Provinces. We must, however, endeavour to take warning by the defects in the constitution of the United States which are now so painfully manifest, and to form, if we succeed in Federation, an efficient central government."* He pleaded for Canada united as one province, under one sovereign.

Brown and Cartier were as loyal to one sovereign as John A. Macdonald, but they were not in favour of a Dominion organized as a single province. Cartier was determined to preserve the religious institution and privileges of Quebec. Brown was equally determined to establish adequate local control over local affairs in Upper Canada. Both were provincial in their ideal rather than national. Unquestionably in Lower Canada there was a real anxiety at taking this plunge into the unknown waters of a new constitution.

It is not necessary to more than mention the long-drawn-out constitutional struggle between Macdonald and Mowat as to Federal and Provincial rights. You all know how in that struggle the rights of the provinces were incontestably established.

In 1874 we find an attempt to inaugurate a Canadian

National movement in the founding of the National Club at Toronto and the Canada First Party. Undoubtedly Sir John A. Macdonald took advantage of the sentiment created by that movement in his National Policy campaign of 1878. Since then, however, one cannot say that there has ever been a clear-cut propaganda for Canadian Nationalism in the highest and broadest sense. We have had the good old British flag waved vigorously at times, but never has the Canadian flag been loosened to the breeze to lead any political party to victory.

The second phase of Confederation must be our devotion to the national rather than the provincial ideal. The war, while it has demonstrated our national possibilities, has brought sharply to the forefront our national incoherency and our real lack of unity. Never before had it been demanded of Canada to put forth her whole strength as a nation. We must not be self-delusionists. This great crisis has demonstrated that we are not yet a nation in the sense that we are moved by one common national impulse and inspiration.

What are the facts? We have a country as great as Europe—with a thin smear of less than 8,000,000 citizens scattered along a frontier of 4,000 miles. This citizenship has as its root stock two important races—French and Anglo-Saxon. (In addition we have representatives of over one hundred other races. The Bible in Canada is printed in 110 different languages).

It is true that when Germany threw her great military machine into Belgium her attack was as much against Canada as Britain—that if France and the contemptible little army had been unable to stay the German hordes, that if the British fleet had failed in this great testing hour, then nothing could have saved Canada from the heavy hand of the German invader. We now know that to be the simple incontrovertible fact. But how many of the thousands of men who hastened to the colours and crossed the seas to take their places in France and Flanders thought that they were going forth to defend Canada.

Eighty per cent. of the first Canadian contingent were British-born. They did not hurry home to defend Can-

ada from German invasion, but to defend the homes they had so recently given up in the old country. The fact is beyond question that the majority of the members of the great army which did such magnificent things in Europe during the first two years of the war, and which is called Canadian, were not native-born. In this fact there is a lesson for the native-born Canadian. Nothing so much helps a country to become a great nation as a glorious history. These British-born who had been with us for only a few years have, in the name of Canada, fought this good fight for human liberty. They have made Ypres, Festubert, Givinchy, Courcellette, Vimy Ridge and Paschendael, names to conjure with. These glorious battles have done much to stir within us the dominant force of nationhood and yet the men who have made history for us were the despised broncho and sparrow. As one of the numerous army of the non-pugnacious native-born, I feel that we are getting for Canada a good deal of glory under false colours.

Should we not therefore in the future regard the new-comer with more open-heartedness, and getting rid of petty localism and prejudice, endeavour to see the full possibilities of our new citizens. And this applies not only to the British-born, but to all others alien to the Empire.

The only compensation Canada can get from the sacrifice of blood and treasure in this terrible war will be national unity. From these nine scattered Provinces must come the Canadian nation. This must be the result of the soul-stirring events of the last three years.

Think of what has happened. We have raised, equipped and sent to fight in a European war 375,000 men. We have spent over a billion of money. For two years and nine months we were the sole representative of the Allied powers on the western hemisphere. We now stand in the position of an equal ally with our powerful neighbor, who regards with amazement what we have accomplished before she began. From now on Canada is a nation taking her proud place among the nations of the world.

But we are only at the beginning of nationhood. It must be the duty of every patriotic Canadian to turn away from

the local, the racial and the provincial to the national aspiration. That, as I have said before, is the second phase of Confederation.

To accomplish our great purpose we have many complex and difficult problems to solve. The success of our nation-building will depend on our ability to find solutions for these problems. Of course, the problem in which we have the most interest is the finding of a *modus vivendi* for the two basic races. We cannot disguise the fact that the war has brought acutely to the surface the fundamental differences between the two races. We have learned the things which the two races regard as the most important.

Suddenly the good-will and toleration which during fifteen years had with considerable enthusiasm elected a French-Canadian to the Premiership seemed to disappear, to be replaced by ill-will and bitter animosity, and on both sides of the Ottawa River the stormy petrels of fanaticism have made the most of their opportunity. At a crisis when unity was essential we were torn asunder.

What are the fundamental differences which undoubtedly to-day do divide the great root races of Canada? This division seems to arise generally out of differences of opinion in connection with three important questions. The first is as to the extent of Canada's participation in the war, and the means adopted for that participation. The second is that the French-Canadian is frankly anti-imperialistic and charges the English-Canadian with being imperialistic. The third is over the question of language, the storm centre being the dispute arising in connection with the French-English schools of Ontario.

As to the first question, the extent of Canada's participation in the war and the methods employed to effect that participation, it must be admitted that the differences are fundamental and unavoidable. It is evident to anyone who is at all familiar with the Province of Quebec that the French-Canadian cannot possibly feel as deeply about the war as the English-Canadian. No good purpose can be served by discussing this question at any length. The English-Canadian took quite seriously the declaration that we are in this war to the last man and the last dollar, and de-

terminated to adopt measures which were necessary to make that declaration good in fact. The issue has been determined in a general election and a great majority of the people of Canada have declared in favour of full participation. While the whole matter has created the most acute strife and ill-feeling, it is nevertheless merely temporary in its effect on the future relations of the two races. The majority having unmistakably determined in what way we are to participate in the war, the people of Quebec, as good, law-abiding Canadian citizens, have accepted the decision and will obey the law. The war will some day be over and time, the great healer, will deaden the feeling of injury and ill-will which undoubtedly now exists, and Quebec will have as much cause to be proud of its battalions of draftees as they are of the splendid 22nd, the heroes of Courcellette.

The second question, relating to imperialism, I do not regard as serious. It is at present rather in the realms of academic politics and has not as yet touched the great mass of the people. In my judgment there is in Quebec an entire misconception as to the views of the English-Canadians on this question. There is no doubt that we are strong for the British Empire and proud of all it stands for, and the reason we are proud of it is because the British Empire is not really an empire at all. If it were an Empire in the sense of the German Empire we would long since have broken away from it, but this loose collection of nationalities which goes to make up the British Empire is not an Empire in any such sense. It is a Commonwealth of free nations held together in support of the same principles of democracy as those for which the United States and France stand. We believe in this British Commonwealth as it is now constituted because under it we receive full and free government for ourselves and because the same rights are extended to all the nations within the Empire capable of self-government. The proudest thing a Canadian can say to-day is that if we had so desired we could have maintained our technical belligerency with Germany and that except by our own free will we need not have sent a man to the war or spent a dollar. Of course, submarine warfare would have drawn us into hostilities as it did the United States. Our French-Canadian friends need not fear that any cam-

paign for the centralization of Imperial government will ever receive substantial support from English-speaking Canada. Sir Robert Borden's declaration on his return from the Imperial Conference last year makes this clear.

The third difficulty relating to language is the most serious, and will be the most lasting. Some solution of this problem must be found if these two races are to live harmoniously together, and if they are to co-operate in the building of Canada into a great nation. I desire to make it plain that the views which I may express on this question are personal, and that I do not speak in my official capacity as vice-president of the *Bonne Entente*. The chief difficulty is our inaccessibility to one another. Distrust and suspicion come from lack of knowledge. It is difficult to understand the point of view of the man you do not know. Canada will never be wholly an English country, and it will never be wholly a French country. It will be the Canada produced from a harmonious working together of the two races, each affecting the other, each giving of its best in the making of the whole race. I am not speaking of what Canada may be a thousand years from now. But this is certain, that in the immediate centuries which are to come there can be no such thing as assimilation of the French by the English. The French-Canadian is a too persistent stock for anything like that to happen. In 1763 there were but 85,000 French-Canadians in Canada. Without help from immigration they have increased, counting those in the United States, to probably three millions. They will keep on increasing. Whether we like it or not, that is a fact, and we have to deal with facts, not theories.

The first thing both races must get to understand is race-consciousness, that thing which is so persistent and obtrusive in all of us. The racial feeling which has been inherited through a long line of ancestors cannot be separated from you. It is you. The medium of race-consciousness is language. Any attempt to promote better understanding is hopeless until there is a full realization of the depth of sentiment connected with language and race-consciousness.

In dealing with this much vexed question of language I

have no hope that my appeal will have any effect on the extremist, either in Quebec or in Ontario, but, thank God, extremists do not settle such questions. It is the moderate man that works out the nation's salvation and he is in the majority in both Provinces.

I want to submit to you five propositions which I believe should and must be accepted by moderate men of both races if we are to find a solution for our difficulties.

1. That which I have already tried to make clear—that the rights of the Provinces within the Constitution are now fully settled and determined and cannot be interfered with.
2. That it is the duty of the Province of Ontario to see that the French-English schools are efficient.
3. That it is in the interest of both the French-Canadian and the English-speaking citizens in Ontario that the French-Canadian should learn English.
4. That there can be no possible objection to the French-Canadian being given adequate instruction in his own language so that he may speak and read it correctly and have an opportunity to become acquainted with its literature.
5. All these matters must be discussed and dealt with having regard to fairness and justice and the recognition of racial sensibility and race-consciousness.

The first two do not need much discussion. Each Province jealously guards its own right. The right of the Province of Ontario to deal with this question has been determined by the highest Court of Appeal in the Empire. If the Province of Ontario saw fit to prohibit the use of French in any of its schools it might infringe certain privileges enjoyed, and properly enjoyed, but it would not infringe any legal right which our French-Canadian citizens have. Consequently no good purpose can be served by the constant reiteration of statements to the effect that our Provincial Legislature has deprived a minority of its legal rights.

The second proposition, that these schools should be made efficient, is not open to discussion. And yet we should remember that the bilingual agitation arose over the fact

that these schools were not efficient. Teachers were employed who were not properly qualified. The progress of the pupils was unsatisfactory. The enrollment of pupils was away below what it should have been, and the attendance was uncertain and unsatisfactory. There should be the sincerest co-operation between our French-Canadian friends and the Government to make these schools as efficient as possible. I am speaking of efficiency not so much as it relates to language, but as it relates to the general pedagogic character of the school.

The last three propositions must be discussed together. That is to say, the teaching of English, the teaching of French, and the dealing with the whole question upon the principles of *Bonne Entente*.

Let me quote the opinion of an authority which many of us do not recognize, but which in this matter is sound and should by its wisdom commend itself to all of us. Pope Benedict, in his statesmanlike encyclical to the French and English-speaking Catholics of Quebec and Ontario, said:

"Nobody can deny that the civil Government of Ontario has the right to exact that children should learn English in the schools; and likewise that the Catholics of Ontario legitimately require that it should be perfectly taught in order that their sons should be placed on the same level in this respect with the non-Catholic children who frequent the neutral schools, and that they should not be eventually less fitted for the higher schools or be disqualified for civil employments. Nor, on the other hand, is there any reason to contest the right of French-Canadians, living in the Province, to claim, in a suitable way, however, that French should be taught in schools attended by a certain number of their children; nor are they indeed to be blamed for upholding what is so dear to them."

I intend to make that the basis of all my remarks on this question.

Do the French-Canadians want to learn the English language? In my judgment they do. With one solitary exception I have met no French-Canadian who has not stated that it is in the interests of his race that they should know the language spoken by one hundred million people on this continent. Mr. Gagné in his eloquent address here a few weeks ago made that particularly plain.

The one thing which the educated French-Canadian has a right to be proud of is his bilingualism. That which makes

us feel stupid and uneducated in his presence is our unilingualism. The French-Canadian knows that no career is ahead of him in this country or in the United States unless he can speak English. If he has only his own language he will continue to be the farmer, the shanty-man, and the labourer. If he is to have a political career or a professional career he must know English. In the bilingual motion which was moved two years ago by Mr. LaPointe in the House of Commons, *the necessity was declared of every French-Canadian child being given a thorough English education*. Paul Lamarche, the late member for Nicolet, in the debate on the same resolution, said: "*Some of our Ontario friends say that English ought to be known by every person in this Dominion, and I entirely agree with that. Let me in a few words state our position in regard to the English and French languages. We consider a French education as a duty and the acquisition of the English language as a necessity.*" I believe that if we only go about this question in the right way the French-Canadian minority in Ontario will learn English.

What we have to understand, however, is that we English cannot jam our language down the throats of the French-Canadian. He who attempts to do that knows nothing of race-consciousness and the impossibility of the task he is undertaking. That is what Prussia attempted to do so unsuccessfully in Alsace and Lorraine. Treitschke, writing at the close of the Franco-Prussian War, said: "*We Germans who know Germany and France know better than these unfortunates themselves what is good for the people of Alsace who have remained under the misleading influence of their French connection. Against their will we shall restore them to their true selves.*" "Against their will"—that has never been done in the history of the world and never can be done. When you try to rub a language out you only rub it in. Race consciousness is as much a law governing personal action as is self-preservation.

The fundamental mistake which seems to have been made in dealing with this question is the confusion of language as a medium of communication and instruction, and language as a subject of study. The French-Canadian child

when he enters school does not need to be taught colloquial French. He speaks French, he has learned it in the home, in the church, and on the street. He will continue to speak it. What he needs is the building upon that foundation of colloquialism, a knowledge of correct French. It is to his advantage, and he should not be deprived of it, to know how to speak and read the language correctly, and to be introduced to the literature of his mother tongue. With regard to English, he needs to be taught to speak it colloquially. It is a well-known fact that the only way to learn to speak a language is by the direct method. If you want to learn to speak French you do not go to people who can speak English. You go among people who cannot speak English, but who speak only French and being forced to speak French, and to hear nothing but French you will rapidly acquire a working knowledge of the language. It is, of course, the same with English. For this reason English should be the language of instruction and communication from the first form. The child should be instructed in English from the first day he enters the school, but while that is going on there should not be the slightest objection to giving that same child a thorough education in his own language.

This, of course, involves the very serious practical difficulty of obtaining bilingual teachers. In addition to these teachers being bilingual, they must also possess proper pedagogic qualifications so that the schools in other respects will be efficient. These schools are denominational, and it seems to me that the church could greatly assist in helping to solve the difficulty. French-Canadian girls who have already obtained their pedagogic qualifications might be sent, say for a year, to some of the Seminaries in Ontario where English is the language of communication and instruction. On the other hand, English-speaking girls might be sent to some of the Seminaries in the Province of Quebec where French is the language of communication and instruction, and by these means become proficient in French. I am quite sure that in aid of the settlement of this vexed question Government grants could be procured for this purpose, and these could undoubtedly be largely supplemented by private subscription. Of course, during the time when bilingual teachers are being trained there must

be a reasonable administration of the schools. In fact, regulation 17 does recognize the difficulties of this transition period.

The direct method of teaching language, that is, by using that language for instruction and communication from the very beginning, is employed in the West with great success. It is employed in our public schools in Toronto where little Russian children who cannot speak a word of English are taught in English from the beginning, and in a few weeks are speaking and understanding it. Dr. Peaslee, former Superintendent of Schools in Cincinnati, says:

"The fact is that a child can study two languages and do as well in each as he would do if all his time were devoted to either language alone. This fact is indisputable. I know from personal experience that the very statement of the fact seems to one who has not investigated the subject, and who does not understand the working of the infant mind, absurd, paradoxical and foolish. Why? Because an adult is prone to look upon the mind of a little child as he does upon his own. He says to himself, the more time I devote to any one subject the more I can learn of it, therefore, the more my child can. Your conclusion, my dear sir, is mathematically true, but educationally false."

I am, of course, aware that on this question there will be differences of opinion. It will be stated that it is impossible to successfully teach a child in a language which it does not know. It will further be stated that in the cases above mentioned where the direct method is employed there is an English environment which does not exist in French-Canadian settlements in Ontario. All that is true, and there can be no objection to the use of the mother tongue to help in instruction. My general proposition is that emphasis should be placed on the use of English at the beginning of the child's school career rather than upon the use of French.

I believe the time has also come when the learning of French should be made compulsory in all our secondary schools and universities. The curse of this country is not bilingualism, but unilingualism. No nation should pride itself on its inability to speak any language but its own. For three years our Canadian boys have fought side by side with their gallant allies, the French. Many of them will come home with a good working knowledge of French. They will have lived in French billets and will have re-

ceived many kind and sympathetic attentions in these French homes. They will have had impressed upon them the value of bilingualism. This will do much to leaven the lump of unilingualism among the English-speaking people of Canada and will have a great bearing upon this whole question. In addition to that the relations between the two countries will become closer and closer as the years go by. We have struggled together for the same great principles. We have suffered too much together ever to be other than the closest of friends. Why should there be even the suspicion of discrimination against the beautiful language of our Allies?

One of the chief objections which our French-Canadian friends have to regulation 17 is the use of the word "hitherto" in defining what schools shall be bilingual. They very properly claim that the use of this word limits the teaching of French to those primary schools where it has hitherto been taught. If the general principles which I have already set forth are observed, can there be any objection to French-Canadian children being taught in all the schools to speak and read French correctly where proper facilities are at hand to do so? If we emphasize the learning of French in Canada, and by the learning of French I mean French conversation, there would in time be a more sympathetic commingling of the two races, and the ill-feeling, distrust, and suspicion which now exists would gradually die away.

Lord Dufferin said a very wise thing in replying to an address presented to him by the Legislative Assembly of Quebec:

"The reciprocal action of our national idiosyncracies introduces into our existence a verdure, a freshness, a variety, a colour, an electric impulse, which without it would be wanting. It would be a very unwise policy to try to cause it to disappear."

After all, the important matter to consider is that nothing can be accomplished unless a serious, honest effort is made to promote good-will and a better understanding between the races. That is the purpose of what is known as the Bonne Entente movement, which was initiated about a year and a half ago. Bonne Entente does not mean that the two races can get together and agree on specific matters

of policy. The French-Canadian and English-Canadian can never agree on religion. They apparently cannot agree on the question of this war. Their point of view is utterly different from ours, and we see things from another angle altogether.

The purpose of Bonne Entente is not to agree, but to understand. It means the good understanding. It is getting together to know one another, to try and find out the good things that are in the other fellow. I had the honour of being present at the first conference held in Montreal in 1916. About a dozen members of each race sat down and talked over many things, and at the conclusion of that day of mutual intercourse we adopted this resolution:

"We French and English-speaking Canadians in conference assembled for the promotion of national unity, having established, by friendly intercourse, a mutual respect and a firm conviction in the innate fair-mindedness of the vast majority of both races, do hereby place ourselves on record as of the unalterable belief that there is not now, nor ever will be in the future, any issue between the two races in Canada which cannot, and of right should not, be amicably and equitably settled, and in such a manner as to give satisfaction to the great majority of all concerned."

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the great charter of the Bonne Entente, and it is only upon that basis the two great races can work harmoniously towards the building up of a united Canada.

All our strength is in union,
All our danger in discord.

